Westbury, Plek van Hoop and *Waiting for Valdez*: A case study of memory, identity and self-representation in the 'coloured' community of Westbury, Johannesburg.

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In a guest column in the *Sunday Times* in July 2012, Heindrich Wyngaard takes issue with fellow columnist Phyllicia Oppelt, who in her weekly commentary spoke of being Coloured as "...the identity that shamed me" (Oppelt, quoted in Wyngaard, 2012). According to Wyngaard, there is "deep-seated disagreement about identity" amongst Coloured people, with some, like Oppelt, refusing to identify with a name that reflects the "lowly, shameful status bestowed by the apartheid government," whereas others celebrate this identity (Wyngaard, 2012:2). This is emblematic of the way in which, in South Africa, the so-called 'Coloured'[1] community has traditionally inhabited that shadow-world between definitions of race and class. Notions of community, culture and identity have been tenuous, negotiated in an environment of exclusion and stereotyping. In post-apartheid South Africa, the construction of a unified 'imagining' of

[1] For the rest of this paper, the designation "so-called coloured" is avoided. James (1996:41) discusses the use of this term, and the implications of its use by groups other than coloureds themselves, and points out that it has become loaded to a point that it cannot be used effectively. The very notion of Coloured identity as a social reality was seen by intellectuals under Apartheid as a "concession to apartheid thinking, if not ...downright racist" (Adhikari, 2008:80).

community and individual identity has become fraught with issues of race, struggle credentials, politics and history.

In his introduction to Fanon's seminal work *Black Skin, White Masks*, Bhabha dares to ask: "How can the human world live its difference? How can a human being live Other-wise?" (1986/1957:xvii). Communities in transition, scarred by apartheid's marginalisation and oppression, with difference determined purely along racial lines, are still grappling with this question, Communities in transition, in particular those scarred by marginalisation and oppression, Bill Nichols (1991:265) asserts, "[h]istory is where pain and death occur, but it is in representation that these facts and events gain meaning". This chapter investigates visual representations of history and the emergent constructions of culture and identity as exemplified in two films produced by residents of Westbury, a suburb of Johannesburg, classified as 'Coloured' during apartheid: *Westbury, Plek van Hoop* (2003) and *Waiting for Valdez* (2002). These constructions not only challenge dominant representations of the past, but also represent a communal 'remembering' of past disappointments and struggles.

The two films, *Westbury, Plek van Hoop* and *Waiting for Valdez*, have been chosen for a number of reasons. Firstly, both films deal with Westbury, or 'Western', as it is known by residents. Westbury is a suburb in the western part of Johannesburg, west of Mayfair and south of Sophiatown. The residents, who in the pre-1994 era were classified as 'Coloured', were some of the lesser-known

victims of those forcibly removed from Sophiatown during apartheid (Unterhalter, 1987:64). The documentary, *Westbury, Plek van Hoop*, was produced and filmed by the people of Westbury themselves, with some assistance from more experienced filmmakers in the actual shooting and editing. In 2001, an initiative by churches in Westbury led to a reconciliation rally, where gangsters asked for forgiveness from their victims' families and vowed to change their lives[2]. As a result, the two main gangster groupings, the Fast Guns and the Spaldings, virtually dissolved and several of the ex-gangsters turned to other means of income-generation. Some were also trained in film and television production. This chapter examines one of the products of this venture. *Westbury, Plek van Hoop,* produced in 2003 by these ex-gangsters under the auspices of WECODEC (Westbury Community development and Education Centre), reflects their views on the transformation of Westbury, which they have been an integral part of, a change which they no doubt hope will be permanent.[3]

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[2] The reconciliation initiative, spearheaded by church groups, was seen by some as a turning point in Westbury. Others, more pragmatic, noted that the changes could not be permanent. For the group who were part of the production training, however, the rally did lead to a change of direction.

[3] After the peace and reconciliation rally in 2001 and the dissolution of the main gangster groupings (the Fast Guns and the Spaldings) WECODEC was commissioned by KykNet, a channel in the digital bouquet broadcasting in Afrikaans, to make a film about Westbury. The filmmakers were guided in the production process by an experienced producer (Hulette Pretorius) who was involved in the setting up of the television training at WECODEC. Although she wrote the voice over, the conceptualisation and production credits in the end credit list are attributed to Joseph Cotty, the director of WECODEC. The principal photography was done by trainees from WECODEC, and the postproduction was completed by a freelance editor under the guidance of Joseph Cotty and Hulette Pretorius. The original tapes of the interviews that formed part of this film were also transcribed and grouped into themes. These interviews are at present being compiled into a book about Westbury, and were made available for this study. Much of what we learn about how the people view their own community, history and search for

The second film, *Waiting for Valdez* is a short fiction written by Teddy Mattera, who crafts a memory-laden portrait of life in a Coloured township under apartheid rule.[4] Both films offer a vision of the community of Westbury – the first a vision of the present looking forward into an imagined future, the other a nostalgic remembering of the past. Much of the social and community information which is included in the accounts of the interviewees in *Westbury, Plek van Hoop* is only implied in *Waiting for Valdez,* which recounts the story of a boy growing up in Westbury through the very particular lens of his own remembered experience. While the documentary *Westbury, Plek van Hoop* is shot in colour, *Waiting for Valdez* is shot in black and white, evoking both newsreel and an archival aesthetic, capturing the nostalgia of a lost past in resonances of the well known photographs of Sophiatown in its heyday. In evoking the look of old newsreel footage the film also connects us to what is generally accepted as historical truth, thus positioning the film between the realm of pure fantasy and actuality. On the other hand the documentary *Westbury, Plek van Hoop,* when examined closely, proves to be based on an imagined future reality, and can be positioned somewhere on the margins of the purely factual.

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common identity is evident not only from what was included in the film, but from the parts of the original interviews which did not make it into the film. This should not be seen only as a conscious attempt to manipulate information (although it often is) but often is merely due to time constraints. In what follows, some of the interviews that did not make it into the final film have also been cited.

[4] The film was produced as part of MNET's 'New Directions' series, directed by Dumisani Phakati and scripted by Teddy Mattera, son of community leader and poet Don Mattera who is featured in *Westbury, Plek van Hoop.*

Westbury, Plek van Hoop is couched in traditional documentary film language, and does not deviate from the format which is routinely used by many emerging (and established) filmmakers when making a documentary – a series of interviews, with cutaways. Structurally, although it aims to subvert dominant stereotypes, it is modelled on the same documentaries that perpetuated stereotypical views of Black and Coloured communities in the past, such as the many films produced by the apartheid government's information services. The expository [5] style and conventional structure do not evidence a move away from the discourse of apartheid-era documentaries. Rather, the style is being appropriated and reconstituted, possibly indicating a subverted desire on the part of the filmmakers to be part of the discourse from which they were excluded under apartheid. In all likelihood, this choice of style was based on the pragmatic notion that if the film was ever to be broadcast, it had to conform to the structure of broadcast documentary worldwide. What makes the film interesting is not the filmic technique or innovation on a technical level, but the people who participate in relating the story of Westbury. These are the people who are relating their lived experience, and they are doing so for the first time on their own terms. The people themselves made the choices about what should be included, or excluded. For all its flaws as a film, this documentary is embedded

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[5] This is a term first used by Bill Nichols (1991) to describe a documentary, which is set out as an exposition of a series of facts about a specific subject, usually accompanied by "Voice of God" narration. Michael Rabiger (2004:55) describes it as "too didactic" and points out that it "directly addresses issues in the historical world (that is, the world we all see and experience as 'real'" The shortcomings of this documentary style for representing a true feeling of lived experience are self-evident.

in the lived experience of the people who made it, and as such reflects much about the people of Westbury.

The short fiction *Waiting for* Valdez (2002) deals with a young boy named Sharkey, who lives with his grandmother following the removal of his parents to other parts of Johannesburg under the Forced Removals Act. Unable to buy a ticket to go to the cinema to see his hero in the film *Valdez is coming*, Sharkey instead buys the privilege of listening to instalments told by his friends Tox and Feya, who slip into the cinema and then re-tell the story to the other boys. In contrast to its namesake *Waiting for Godot,* where two characters spend a long time waiting for a hero who never arrives, but who is expected at some time in the future, *Waiting for Valdez* is all about memory, about looking back. Told from the point of view of Sharkey, the film starts off with a statement about memory: "Time passes by. You remember things. You don't know why you remember them, but you do." [6] Then, over a lyrical sequence of shots of his grandmother standing at the gate looking out at the world, Sharkey continues: "My granny used to say; you only remember important things…important things." This situates the film in the domain of memory from the start, and as such we are given an intimation that what is about to follow is as much about

[6] In the discussion of *Westbury, Plek van Hoop,* I have referenced which sections of interviews came from the interviews conducted by WECODEC and which sections were from the film itself, in the interests of making more informed comparisons. In the case of *Waiting for Valdez*, all quotations come from the film itself, so referencing was not deemed necessary.

nostalgia as it is about reality. We are also aware that what we are about to see is part of the 'important things' people choose to remember.

The history of Westbury is scarred with tales of exclusion, violence and marginalisation. Don Mattera describes Westbury in a poem he quotes in his interview: (WECODEC, 2003:31):

> …the houses stand like men and women that are condemned to death. And there is not sunshine. Sunshine does not come... Western. Its name does not appear on the Johannesburg map. Like its people, it is a twilight zone there. Twilight people living in a twilight area.... They are neither black, nor white, and painful.

In South Africa, especially in the latter years of apartheid, the term 'community' was sometimes regarded as too culturally and politically laden to be useful as a definition[7]. This appellation, created by the apartheid government, forced heterogeneous groups to live in communal spaces. In time, the process of living together and sharing in stigmatisation and separation forged a sense of community amongst South Africans classified as 'Coloured', a term that was

[7] Under apartheid, the term 'community' was often used interchangeably with other terms such as 'tribe,' 'Coloured' or migrants which were perceived as less acceptable, in an attempt to obfuscate the connection between racial definition and segregation or marginalisation. The notion of 'communities' or 'cultural groups' which voluntarily grouped themselves separately from others so that they could practice their 'communal cultures' was widely propagated and used to justify practices of exclusion and displacement. This 'new racism' based on the supposed incompatibility of cultural traditions also emerged in Britain in the late 1980s (Donald & Rattansi, 1992:2).

based on their assigned difference from other South Africans (Martin, 2001:249).

Under apartheid, self-determination was circumscribed by race, and race became a fundamental principle of social organisation and social engineering. In classifying all citizens broadly into four different categories (White, Black, Indian and Coloured), the authorities were also defining the lines of segregation, and determining the political, economic, and social status of each group. The residents of Westbury are, in the main, classified as 'Coloured', a term also used for 'mixed race'. [8] Like other non-White South Africans, the Coloured population was also subjected to forced removals based on racial classification – the removal from Sophiatown, for instance, was 'segregated' in that Coloureds were moved to Western, or Westbury, and Blacks to Soweto (Unterhalter, 1986:86).

Zimitri Erasmus (2001:18-19) has discussed the racial categories within which Coloureds were classified. Apart from the idea of racial mixture, a persistent trope in the way in which Coloureds have been represented, stereotyped and classified is what Erasmus calls "…colouredness as a residual entity" (ibid:18). Thus, the Population Registration Act No 30 of 1950 defined 'Coloured' as

[8] Before 1904, the term 'Coloured' was taken to mean all non-White persons, including 'Kaffirs'[8] or Blacks. The definition of 'Coloured' was revised in 1967, with the Population Registration Act dividing 'Coloured' into six subsections, one of which was 'Indian' (Alexander, 2006:24).

neither White nor Native[9]. This concept of 'Colouredness' as floating midway between the Black and White "…was given institutional expression in the ambiguous position accorded coloured people in the racial policies of United Party segregation, Verwoerdian apartheid and Botha's tri-cameralism" (Erasmus, 2003:18). While full participation in society was withheld due to their 'non-White' status, Coloureds nevertheless were granted some privileges above Blacks, and "[t]his legacy deeply shaped the ways in which coloured identity was seen in terms of servility and collusion with apartheid" (ibid:18). Adhikari (2006:478) discusses how the intermediate status of Coloureds in the racial hierarchy under apartheid and the relative privileged position was exacerbated by the aspiration to be assimilated into White culture, to be regarded as "...white in mind and spirit and achievement"(*Educational Journal*, December 1917, cited in Adhikari, 2006:476). Denis-Constant Martin (2001:253) describes the ambivalent position of the Coloured elite, who distanced themselves from the working class by aligning themselves with the White ruling class, claiming that their mission was the 'upliftment' of their community, and positioning themselves as representatives of the whole Coloured community. [10] The Coloured elite, while taking a position of

[9] Richard van der Ross also takes issue with the ambiguity of racial classification which is evident in this description. He uses it as a basis for his argument that Coloureds in fact share all the cultural characteristics of Whites, and that Coloured identity is a "myth". (Van der Ross, 1979)

[10] In addition to this ambiguous position taken up by the Coloured elite, certain influential Whites who took a special interest in the Coloureds, like I.D. du Plessis, the Afrikaans poet, were at pains to demonstrate that the Coloureds were different from the Blacks, as they shared a common language (Afrikaans) with Whites. Although this allowed a special link to be formed between Coloureds and certain sections of the White

opposition to the dominant White power base, still "sought to prove their level of civilisation by demonstrating to what extent they had succeeded in assimilating those very same codes and values that the whites used as markers of differentiation (Martin, 2001:253). [11] In an attempt to distance themselves from Africans and maintain their relatively privileged position, Coloureds emphasised their partially White heritage: "But it was precisely this claim that encumbered them with the stigma of racial hybridity" (Adhikari, 2006:482).

The irrationality of some classifications cannot be regarded in a superficial fashion, however, as they have, and continue to have, real consequences for peoples lives. Cornell and Hartmann (1998:25) seem quite matter-of-fact in their description of the process, but this facile description masks a vast reservoir of suffering which becomes readily apparent when one examines the outcome of this social engineering: "People determine what the categories will be, fill them up with human beings, and attach consequences to membership in those categories." During apartheid the consequences of 'membership' in certain categories had often devastating effects that inevitably shaped the striving towards a clear sense of identity and self. Consequently, classifications and

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population, they were still seen as subordinates and 'Malay' culture (from which most of the elite originated) was regarded by Whites as superior to the rest of 'Coloured culture' (Martin,2001).

[11] This echoes Homi Bhabha's description of how oppressed communities emulate their oppressors in order to be recognised as 'civilised'. Bhabha describes this process of psychic identification, and the ambivalence produced by the cultural alienation of the colonial condition, as a condition where it is impossible for coherent identities to be constructed, either from within or without (Bhabha in Fanon, 1986/1957: xii).

reclassifications were also the order of the day.[12] It is ironic that the practices of apartheid were instrumental in creating bonds of suffering and oppression amongst people, which led to the construction of politicised, "collective racialised identities" that could challenge the regime (Zegeye, 2001:6).

Apartheid authorities were well aware that attempts to structure society around racial classification were problematic to say the least. In viewing the concept of 'race' as a social construct, one cannot ignore issues of representation, discourse and power. Donald & Rattansi (1992:1) cite Omi and Winant (1986) in this regard: "'Race' is conceptualised as 'an unstable and 'decentred' complex of social meanings constantly being transformed by political struggle." Thus race and racism are used to legitimise social practices that reinforce the unequal distribution of power between groups (Donald & Rattansi, 1992:3). According to Appiah ([1992], cited in Azoulay, 1996:132), the justification for this dominant ideology and its effects was an illusion of "a notion of communities of meaning based on race." The viability of these "communities" and this racialised identity construction has been rejected as "biologising ideology", as it creates a situation where "race operates as a metonym for culture at the price of ideology" (ibid.).

[12] Van der Ross (1979:47) shows that in the period 1972-1975, more than 200 people were classified from other groups to Cape Coloured, 103 persons were reclassified from Cape Coloured to White, and a total of 79 appeals against the Population Registration Act, 1950 were upheld – interestingly, 70 of these were appeals to be reclassified from Black ('Bantu' in the period mentioned) to Coloured.

Unequal power relations connected each part of the social structure in an intricate web of knowledge and meaning, which regulated the minutiae of everyday existence for all South Africans. Foucault speaks of power as "...a productive network which runs through the whole social body" (Foucault, cited in Hall, 1997:50). Pockets of resistance against the regime could very easily become engulfed in the overwhelming tide of dominant regulated practice, and the histories of suppressed communities were written in terms of the meanings this discourse produced. In the circuit of power under colonial conditions (and under apartheid), identity is closely connected to difference, representation and culture (Hall, 1997). This struggle continues after 1994. The discourses of the past are appropriated in the process of reconstructing identities in the present. 'Blackness' or 'Colouredness' is only known as a binary of 'Whiteness', which precludes the creation of new identities, and could result in the continual re-identification and reworking of previously assigned labels.

This confusion is summarised in the words of Don Mattera:

> Maar vir my het Western, wat nou Westbury is, altyd 'n diep pyn gewys. Want hier is weggegooi, Gods beste kinders, en (vir) hulle word gesê hulle is Hotnots en Boesmans. En hulle sê vandag vir jou: 'eers in Apartheid was ons nie wit genoeg nie, Mnr. Mattera, nou in

die nuwe bedeling is ons nie swart genoeg nie.'

(WECODEC,2003:2)[13]

Westbury, Plek van Hoop is loosely structured in three sections: the first is an overview of the history of Westbury, focusing mainly on the housing problem and the consequences of the forced removal from Sophiatown. Also covered are efforts by individuals in the community and community groups to improve conditions. The second section deals with the results of social problems like gangsterism in the community. The final section features several local young people who have successfully risen above their circumstances. The conclusion gives an overview of the activities of community groups, particularly the Westbury Community Development Centre (WECODEC). This then leads to the final message, reiterating that Westbury is "'n Plek van hoop, lewe en geleenthede (A place of hope, life and opportunities)."

The first interview is with Don Mattera, who recounts the story of how his family moved from Sophiatown. He references the fact that that Coloured people from various areas were 'thrown' into Western, and how little the authorities cared about the conditions in which people were forced to live. Interviewees point out that they were under the impression that the move to Westbury was temporary, however, fifty years later, they are still there. The tenuousness and

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[13] Translation: But for me Western, which is now Westbury, has always caused deep pain. Because God's best children have been discarded here and told they are Hottentots and Bushmen. And today they say to me: 'first under Apartheid we weren't white enough, and now, Mr Mattera, now in the new system we aren't black enough.

marginality of such an existence is self-evident, along with the attendant uncertainty in determining a sense of continuity or affiliation to community and place.

The shape of the film is somewhat predictable: members of the community are interviewed, and these interviews are interspersed with footage of community life, with a female voice over. The narration is upbeat, redolent with phrases pointing out that these are normal people going about their business in the same way as any other community. The opening phrase characterises Westbury as ...'n lewendige en tog soms wrede en wanhopige plek, maar ook 'n plek waar mense nou saambou aan 'n toekoms gevul met hoop, lewe en geleenthede[14].

It is clear that the director wants to represent the community as energetic and hardworking. The voice over then invites the viewer to listen to the stories of Westbury – "…hartseer, maar ook met deernis (…sad, but also with compassion) ". The message is repeated in the next section of narration, where the community's vision for a better future is discussed. This is a clear attempt at subverting entrenched notions of gangsterism and crime in the community, preconceived notions about the community , by characterising Westbury as a suburb that is trying to shake off the past. These opening statements serve as a point of reference for everything that is revealed in the rest of the film.

[14] Translation: A lively and nevertheless sometimes cruel place without hope, but also a place where people are now building together towards a future filled with hope, life and opportunities.

Memory permeates every observation or representation of community life, either from the present or the past. The present is defined in terms of how the community has moved on from the past – and the past is seen through the lens of 'where we are now.' The nostalgic accounts accounts of the exploits of gangsters, thugs and murderers are cast as a melancholic elegy to times gone by. Although the general belief is that 'it is all better now,' there is a certain sense of wistfulness when they speak of the future, and how everything will change at some unspecified time which no-one can predict with certainty. Even the title of the film signifies the intentions of the producers: to present their neighbourhood as a community looking towards the future with optimism and hope.

A sense of communal identity in post-apartheid South Africa is a quest embedded in the unequal power relationships of the past, tracing the "fault lines" which are still very much present in today's social structures.[15] Identities have for some time been regarded as constructions taking place within cultural, social, and historical contexts (Bhabha, 1994; Hall, 1996; Grossman, 1996; Woodward, 1997, Cornell & Hartmann, 1998; Donald & Rattansi, 1992), but are becoming increasingly fragmented, always shifting: "…never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions…constantly in the process of change and transformation" (Hall 1996:4).

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[15] Herman Wasserman (2003:16) has cautioned that unconditional acceptance and celebration of a hybrid culture in South Africa could disregard the inherent "fault lines" in South African society (both economic and political) that prevent free cultural exchange across boundaries. Social, economic and political power relationships have not yet transformed sufficiently to allow for a completely free interchange across racial, social and economic divisions.

In recent academic debates, the concept of identity has become almost synonymous with the theory and politics of identity and difference (Grossman, 1996:87). It is now accepted that identities are constantly being constructed and deconstructed (Hall, 1996:4, Zegeye, 2001:3), that the process of taking up certain subject positions in relation to others is fluid and ongoing. Identity is as much defined by what it excludes, what it is not, as by binding forces such as history or spatial connections. The social construction of identities therefore takes place within "the play of power and exclusion" (Hall, 1996:5).

Although much has been written on identity formation in White and Black communities in South Africa, the notion of Coloured identity is still contested and ambiguous[16]. The conceptualisation of Coloured identity in South Africa is interesting because it resists discourses of essentialism and politically expedient classifications, urging us instead to examine notions of shared culture, shared histories of displacement and oppression, as well as communal memory. Spatially, Coloured history is associated with tales of displacement and forced removals. In the case of Westbury, the forced removal of the community from Sophiatown on 9 February 1956 looms large in all accounts of their shared history, and the trauma of that displacement still permeates their perceptions of themselves, their community, and the places where they live (Unterhalter,

[16] See the "Social Identities South Africa" series, and in particular the volumes edited by Abebe Zegeye (2001) and Zimitri Erasmus (2003). In addition, Wasserman & Jacobs (2003) write specifically about the shifting notion of different racial identities in post-apartheid South Africa. Field (1998/1999, 2001) and Adhikari (2005, 2006, 2008) have focused specifically on the contested notion of Coloured identity.

1984:64). In terms of acknowledged racial ancestry, the early history of miscegenation, which was clouded in conjecture and secrecy and subject to moral censure, often prevented communities from celebrating a shared lineage. According to Mohamed Adhikari (2008:86) even the liberal essentialist approach to Coloured identity still takes a racialised view, in that "it conceptualises Colouredness in terms of race and defines it as a product of miscegenation", thereby reinforcing a view of Coloureds as "relatively uncivilised and in need of white tutelage". In fact, Jane Battersby (in Wasserman, 2003:123) reiterates the views of Field (2001) and Rasool (1996) about the negative identity constructions of Coloured people, which she attributes to "The lack of acceptance by white and black populations, coupled with the lack of positive historical representation". Adhikari points out how the negative associations attached to Colouredness under apartheid were informed by the view that they were not a separate group or nation that could be defined, with their intermediate position and marginality constraining social and political action (Adhikari, 2006:486).

Race and class have remained "the master narratives of most South African texts in the post-apartheid context" (Wasserman, 2003:17). [17] Coloured people, who

[17] Identity studies have, in South Africa, often focussed on race as a marker of difference and therefore identity. According to Sarah Nuttall (2000:16) this overwhelming emphasis on race as a "master signifier of the South African Apartheid experience" has indelibly left its mark on discussions of culture, identity and subjectivity, with cultural debates traditionally "…tied to an identity politics based on visibility: a visibility largely reliant on the markers of race"(ibid: 16).

do not fall comfortably within the boundaries of Blackness or Whiteness, may turn towards culture as a marker of identity. Zimitri Erasmus also proposes that instead of defining Coloured identity purely in terms of race, we look to culture[18] for a way forward: "Rather, we need to see them as cultural identities comprising detailed bodies of knowledge, specific cultural practices, memories, rituals and modes of being" (Erasmus, 2001:21).

Ebrahim Rasool (1996:56) writes: "Coloured consciousness and identity, rather than being self-aware, empowering and confident, is constructed fearfully, out of threat and opposition, and defined in negative relation to the other, not through a positive perception of the self." The ambiguous position of Coloureds under apartheid[19], the marginalised existence that these communities were forced to lead, has left the process of constructing a sense of identity (no matter how fragile) burdened with emotion and uncertainty. Saun Field (2001:104) points out that this construction of a place in the world is no simple thing: "…the

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[18] An interesting development in recent years has been the interchangeable use of the concepts of race and culture, where a person's culture could define his or her race to outsiders, and vice versa. Thus culture has become central to the politics of race and "…it has also become more *reductively* conceived, as if it becomes a biological term through its proximity to the concept of race" (Gilroy, 1993a: 57).

[19] Coloured people seemed to be culturally problematic to the authorities. Although the close connections to their oppressors through shared language, musical expression and literature cut across racial divisions and gave rise to cultural expressions which could "traverse all strata of society" (Martin, 2001:259), there was also some confusion, not only as to the categories that could be externally assigned, but also within the community, with Coloureds feeling a sense of common culture with their oppressors, but being prevented from participating in the social and cultural life of Whites. After the political transition in 1994, being (or remaining) part of the Coloured community is a self-determined choice. There is the opportunity for agency, for choosing a real identity above a politicised identity based on Apartheid classifications, for choosing whether to "occupy this category that was created by Apartheid" (Zegeye, 2001:188).

emotional consequences of living hybrid identities can be confusing, complicated and painful." Even the communities themselves do not always acknowledge this pain. When recounting their remembrances of past oppression, communities take the safe option of couching their tales in the dominant storytelling paradigms of their previous oppressors. This suggests that the grand narratives of race and racial construction persist in South Africa after 1994.

When looking at cultural identities, it is useful to explore the notion of hybridity, one of the most contested concepts in postcolonial studies. Renato Rosaldo's notion of "borderland anthropology" (1989:202) offers the space for fragmented communities to reclaim cultural identities in a process of "creative hybridisation". Communities operating in Bhabha's 'interstitial space'(1996:59) [20] are offered the possibility of negotiation of cultural authority within conditions of political oppression. The third space is the site of the moment of challenging the dominant cultural power (Nuttall, 2000:7). Erasmus

[20] Bhabha emphasises how the concept of hybridity can describe "…the construction of cultural authority within conditions of political antagonism or inequity." The hybrid strategy offers a space of negotiation within the interplay of power which is the hallmark of situations of oppression. "Such negotiation is neither assimilation nor collaboration. It makes possible the emergence of an 'interstitial' agency that refuses the binary representation of social antagonism (Bhabha, 1996:59). In this interstitial space, it becomes possible to move away from the "partial culture" that used to define groups and to reconstruct histories and identities, and a new vision of community. The third space is the site of the moment of challenging the dominant cultural power (Nuttall, 2000:7). However, this notion of opposition through the coming together of distinct cultures to form a hybrid which subverts and challenges dominant stereotypes is always tied to the politics of resistance.

(2001:16) suggests that Coloured identity is not simply the result of racial mixture, but is characterised by "cultural borrowing and creation under the very specific conditions of creolisation". Like Nuttall (2000) Erasmus points towards the term 'creolisation' when looking at hybrid processes at work. The term signifies cultural borrowing and cultural creation under conditions of marginality, the "construction of an identity out of elements of ruling as well as subaltern cultures" (Erasmus, 2001:16). However, as Erasmus correctly points out, the fact of borrowing from dominant cultures does not invalidate the identity that is constructed, and neither should Coloured identity be seen as purely an apartheid label – it is being shaped and reconstructed continuously by Coloured people themselves (ibid:16). [21]

When one interrogates notions of hybridity and creolisation with regards to this "borderland" cultural production, the image that arises is of a free flow of creative energy between previously isolated groups, of cultural borrowings and the interchange of ideas in the construction of new social and cultural identities. The interaction that takes place in this hybrid state is seen as fluid, a free flowing river between two sites of differentiation, a gentle stream of cultural interaction and intermingling. This border zone is, however, also one of abrasion, of rubbing up against assigned identities and entrenched stereotypes. In the friction that is created when the aspiration to reconstruct identities encounters the

[21] According to Adhikari (2009:96), the use of creolisation theory as an approach to the formation of Coloured identity holds much potential as an innovative line of enquiry.

stereotypical discourses of the past, entrenched patterns are more likely to be deepened before the flow can be redirected into more productive channels.

In the case of the community of Westbury, the making of films such as *Westbury, Plek van Hoop* and *Waiting for Valdez* could be regarded as an attempt to challenge dominant discourses of the past with a view to reconstructing communal identities. These discourses include the rewriting or retelling of the partial histories of the apartheid era by giving a voice to those who were blanked out in the process of writing official histories, thus denying the oppressed colonial subjects individuality, culture or subjectivity (Gqola,in Zegeye, 2001:46). The way in which groups imagine their community identity is intimately linked to a narrative constructed from fragments of memory (and forgetting!) of shared oppression, the traumatic dislocations of life under apartheid and tales of heroic resistance. However, this leads to the unconscious reconstruction of identities in terms of past stereotypes. Recollection of the past takes place within a specific paradigm of shared history and oppression, with certain key features elided and others, ~~which~~ supporting the overarching narrative, being given undue emphasis. This is evident in the evocative recollection and retelling of stories of the sites of forced removals, like Sophiatown and District Six. Phaswane Mpe (2003:185) notes how

> Sophiatown and Soweto (…) have been microcosms of the struggle in which the apartheid state apparatus and its opponents played out their political drama. The two are also often presented as sites of

> pain, alienation and frustration, while simultaneously serving as anchors of hope in the possibilities of the future" Mpe (2003:185).

In post-apartheid South Africa, perceptions of many communities are scarred by entrenched stereotypes, like the view of Coloured communities as groups of violent thugs and gangsters. In the absence of cultural and social histories, Coloured communities are akin to Glissant's notion of "cornered communities" (cited in Erasmus, 2003:22-3), where social history has been eradicated. In the absence of concrete references to history, Coloured identities are constructed from fragments of cultural material available in the contexts of memories of oppression and cultural dispossession. David Pinnock (cited in Pillay, 2003:286) points out that with forced removals, whole cultures began to disintegrate – not only the physical structures of schools, streets, houses and shebeens, but also social spaces like networks of friendships, neighbourhood and work. These networks provide a sense of solidarity, local loyalties and traditions. Pillay (2003:286) argues that cultures are constantly changing, being 'ripped up' and reconstituting[22].

[22] Pillay's study is based on the Cape Flats, but his observations could be applied to Coloured communities in general, including Westbury. He shows how existing neighbourhood networks like church groups, soccer matches, and social events are marginalised and excluded by the dominant discourse, and only reported on when they happen within the previously Whites-only suburbs. The community networks on the Cape Flats are typified as drug traffickers and prostitutes, riddled with alcohol abuse: "The suburbs and its concerns are universalized, while the Cape Flats and its concerns are particularized, pathologised and eulogized" (Pillay, 2003:286).

The way that past history is being reconstituted in *Westbury, Plek van Hoop,* is evident in the discussion on the activities of gangsters. This section is introduced as "Westbury se donker kant het eens op 'n tyd al die mooi dinge verswelg (At one time, Westbury's dark side engulfed all the beautiful things)". Don Mattera relates incidents of gang activity and the terrible violence that took place – to the extent that people were scared of going into the area, calling it 'Bangladesh'. Others take up the narrative, recounting exploits of the likes of Fellas Timmerman, who hid from the police in the family refrigerator. These stories are told without rancour, and with seemingly little condemnation of the violence and bloodshed caused by the gangsters. Janga, an ex-gangster, characterises it as: "Die lewe was 'n bietjie woes gewees daardie tyd…(Life was a bit fierce in those days...) " And Antie Pula says : " Dit was vir ons soos 'n film… (For us, it was like a film…)." The adjective used to describe the gangsters is 'woelig' – or 'restless'. Hardly the terminology one would expect in the light of the tales of regular funerals, gang confrontations, drug and alcohol abuse and social disintegration.

The figure of Peter Faver, an ex gang leader and later a director of WECODEC, is a core element of this discourse. He is presented as a reformed man, someone who became a gangster, not because of the social circumstances that surrounded him, but because he lost both his primary caregivers at a young age and lived close to the gang headquarters. He is referred to by Antie Pula as: " 'n Kind soos enige kind - baie woelerig. As hy aankom dan sê ons: Daar kom hy! (A child like any other child – very restless. When we see him approach we would

say – Here he comes!)" Peter himself does not focus on the violence and bloodshed, but focuses on how gangsterism tore the community apart. This underscores one of the strong messages of the film, which is essentially a call for community responsibility and accountability.

Westbury's gangsters not only acted like people from movies, but also actively sought this image by choosing their names from movies [23]. This emulation of what they imagined to be the 'Hollywood' lifestyle made them much more appealing to young people. The nightlife of Sophiatown, that almost mythological place of never-ending revelry, also figures in the recent memory of the community. It is this irresistible merging of the unattainable world of cinema with the community's recent history that was ripped away from them, which is especially potent; within the film, loss becomes interwoven with the search for identity. Similarly, in *Waiting for Valdez,* the world of cinema, and cinema heroes, became a substitute for role models who are lacking in the real world.

Instead of subverting the stereotypes of the community as violent and unstable, filled with dangerous people, the interviewees in *Westbury, Plek van Hoop* hold up an image of a community trying to atone for their sins. The heroes have not changed; they have merely reformed and are therefore now held to be respectable. The possibility that there could be some gangsters or drug dealers

[23] In the interviews by WECODEC, Don Mattera gives a brief account of where the gangs got their names – with the exception of the Spaldings, who got their names from the world of golf (another unattainable lifestyle for the people living in Westbury), all the gangs were named after films that came to the local movie theatre.

still operational in the community is mentioned in passing. However, the reason for the persistence of 'woeligheid' in young people is not laid at the government's door, since little has changed in the social circumstances of the community. If we love God, says Joseph Cotty, we can love our neighbours.

It is not surprising that people group themselves around ideas or imaginings of what binds them and what makes them different, looking to their past to do so. We are reminded of Anthony Smith's description of how 'ethnie'[24] use remembrance to face the insecurity of an uncertain presence (Smith1986, cited Fenton 1999: 7-8). In the case of the residents of Westbury, however, the reconstruction of memory through film is selective and interpretative, since the representation in the film is also an attempt to re-enter the collective of South Africa as equal members of society. The exploits of the heroes of the past, the gangsters and thugs who seem to have come to represent the whole of Westbury in the eyes of the outside world, are told and retold without rancour and with a certain melancholy wistfulness. If the gangsters themselves are now open to censure and denunciation, the qualities they represented (masculinity, strength, uncompromising retaliation in the face of adversity) are not condemned, but

[24] Anthony Smith (cited in Fenton, 1999:7-8) refers to loose constructions of community as 'ethnie', which provide a historically enduring sense of peoplehood to members of the group, inspiring a nostalgia for the past and traditions: "By invoking a collective name, by the use of symbolic images of community, by the generation of stereotypes of the community and its foes, by the ritual performance and rehearsal of ceremonies and feasts and sacrifices, by the communal recitation of past deeds and ancient heroes' exploits, men and women have been enabled to bury their sense of loneliness and insecurity in the face of natural disasters and human violence", enabling them to transcend their individual existences by feeling that they were partaking of a 'collectivist' and 'historic' fate.

celebrated. This is especially apparent in *Waiting for Valdez,* but permeates the subtext of the tales told about gangsters in *Westbury, Plek van Hoop*.

The spaces between contesting subjectivities are not porous, allowing a free flow of meaning between them – they jostle up against each other. To change a stereotype and reconstruct identities, the stereotype needs to be recognised and challenged. In the indeterminate space of identity construction in Coloured communities, the tenuously reconstructed identities resonate with echoes of the dominant narratives of the past. If the community of Westbury needs to demonstrate that they have shaken off the past in order to become part of a greater South African collective, they will revisit old stereotypes and reconstruct new marginalities if necessary.

The interviewees are at pains to point out that although poverty is still a problem; the streets are safe to walk in. Social life is reviving. The closing statements of the film indicate that: "Hierdie gemeenskap weerspieel die verlede, hede, en toekoms van Suid-Afrika…Uniek in eie reg en gereed om enige hindernis te oorkom met leierskap, visie en passie... [25].

In this attempt to portray a sanitised and normalised image of Westbury to television viewers, the film seems to imply that residents of this community are part of the broad South African project of truth and reconciliation, part of the

[25] Translation: This community reflects the present, past and future of South Africa. Unique in its own right and ready to overcome any obstacle with leadership, vision and passion...

'rainbow nation' which is so integral to the dominant discourse about society in South Africa after 1994.

Waiting for Valdez opens with a series of jerky, repetitive but lyrical shots of Sharkey's grandmother standing at the gate, ending with a shot through the front door of the house, juxtaposed with a voice talking very fast in an African language, possibly arguing. The implication is that she is watching the world go by – warts and all – with her usual benevolence and patience. The repetition of shots of the grandmother at the garden gate, the close-ups of her face and her rings, place her within the film's discourse as the representative of the past, the 'important things' that need to be remembered to be able to continue into the future. The granny stands for all that she tries to teach Sharkey; the stability and moral values that she tries to inculcate, together with more practical advice like "Don't forget to pray and pee." Much of the nostalgia in the film is centred on the figure of the granny, who is presented with great affection and compassion. The camera lingers over details of her hands and her face as she watches Sharkey sleep. To South African audiences, she is the prototype of everyone's granny. Even the radio programme she listens to (*Squad Cars*) is an old favourite, remembered with nostalgia by people of all races. Watching her knit Sharkey's jersey, we are reminded of the women in our own families that fed and clothed us, and this draws viewers together even in a society as racially divided as South Africa. She is a bearer of memories, and when she tells Sharkey about his past, he remarks that she is retelling the past as if the retelling would make it more concrete and preserve it: "She talked as if she was afraid

that in time the pictures might fade and in the end we would only be left with a memory of a memory." Her attempts to construct a heritage, a bloodline, with references to his resemblance to his grandfather and uncle, even drawing a line to Sarah Baartman, the first historic icon of the Khoi, ancestors of the Coloured community, are interrupted by Pangwaan coming to call Sharkey away. In the absence of a written history of her people, she is keeping the past alive by reliving and retelling it – "…so that I could feel it too".

However, this remembering is not without pain for Sharkey. In recounting his longing to hear the story of *Valdez is coming,* he also has to take a long hard look at an unpleasant fact – that he was not with his grandmother when she died, that she called him and he was engaged elsewhere. Looking at the past is not something that is easy, it is an abrasive experience full of scratchy shameful bits, along with intensely emotional memories and parts that we actually do not want to see or acknowledge. Toni Morrison describes this well: "We live in a land where the past is always erased… The past is absent or it's romanticised. This culture doesn't encourage dwelling on, let alone coming to terms with, the truth about the past" (Toni Morrison, in an interview with Paul Gilroy, 1993: 179). Yet memory is crucial for the rediscovery of a place in the world, an identity which is knocked into shape over time through remembering and experience: remembering 'important things' is crucial for this process of construction. In a continuous process of memory, current identity can be reshaped and reformed:

> In seeing identity as being concerned with 'becoming', those laying claim to identity are not only positioned by identity, they are able to

> position themselves and are able to reconstruct and transform historical identities (Woodward, 1997:21).

The film deals with Westbury, or Western, some twenty-five years ago. This was at the height of apartheid, and yet the difficulties of finding a place in this fragmented society are only touched upon, except in a few references like the swimming pool in Lenasia where they cannot go swimming because "You're not Indian" (recalling the bizarre classification laws of the time). The story of Ous' Nana, a neighbour, is a poignant reminder of the realities of trying to negotiate the complexities of racial classification in apartheid South Africa. We are told right at the start that she was forced to move to Soweto (a township for Blacks) and that she died there. Sharkey then picks up the earlier part of the story, where Ous' Nana was still nursing her complexion and trying to become a Coloured. Obviously more than a little inebriated, she sings as she hands Sharkey the parcel with his granny's 'medicine' and makes the optimistic pronouncement: "Who knows? I may even pass for White! No more kaffir blues for me!"

During apartheid, the uncertain position of the Coloureds in the racial hierarchy led to an experience of segregation and subjugation, in common with all 'Non-Whites', although they could not be comfortably classified in terms of the racial binary. In some cases, this spurred Coloureds to 'try for White', crossing the 'boundary' between races and living as White people in a society where this gave them access to privileges reserved for the dominant racial group. In South Africa, the practice of 'passing' was undoubtedly perceived in a negative light by apartheid authorities, as it subverted the official practice of racial

classification and blurred the lines that had been so painstakingly drawn between ethnic groups. This practice was shrouded in secrecy and censure, but was still relatively widespread, despite the obvious dangers and trauma involved for the individual. [26]

This glimpse of the confusion and pain caused by the assigned identities of the Apartheid classification system is followed by Sharkey's visit to his parents, who live in Eldorado Park, an area reserved for Coloureds. According to granny, this area offers two choices: '…if you don't go to the beer hall, you go to the church." The different people who populate Sharkey's world are emblematic of the social ills of the apartheid system – Ous' Nana who would love to pass for White (or at least Coloured) is living in the shadow world between classifications; his mother who dreams vainly of becoming a movie star and his alcoholic father. Despite the difficult circumstances under which the people are living, Sharkey has it relatively easy – as his best friend says, he is lucky to have a granny who loves him, who knits him jerseys to wear to school and watches over him with great benevolence and love. When she is taken ill and passes

[26] In her autobiographical novel *Kroes*, Pat Stamatélos relates how, on the basis of a father and mother who were 'half White', she and her siblings qualified for reclassification as 'White' in 1960's South Africa. She unmasks the trauma such a decision unleashes, with the confusion and fear that accompanied attempts to cross the racial divide in the height of Apartheid. It seems that a few drops of 'White' blood were sufficient for reclassification if you appeared White enough.

away while he is out listening to the next instalment of the retelling of *Valdez is Coming*, we feel real compassion for Sharkey.

The choice of *Valdez is Coming,* a film about retribution for a transgression that can never truly be set straight, is not accidental. From the first vision of the poster of the film, we are aware that the figure of Valdez represents a complex heroic figure in the boys' minds. Feyas starts his account of the film by stating Valdez's dilemma: "What must a man do to avenge another's death when he himself killed a man accidentally?" The theme of vengeance and violent death give us a clue to the role of the film in providing masculine role models – role models who are not so far removed from the male role models the boys are growing up with in their community. The figure of Valdez, the anti-hero who becomes a hero, resonates with the experience of boys in this community. In the absence of stable family relationships in a fragmented and displaced community, membership in a gang offers a sense of self, which is rooted in a very traditional perception of what it means to be a man.

As Vigil (1993:10) noted, communities like this offer small children limited options in terms of role models, and it is not surprising that they look to the cinema for heroes. The qualities associated with Valdez (a thirst for vengeance, uncompromising quest for justice) are those which gang members aspire to, the consequences of which are described in detail in the descriptions of gang activities in *Westbury, Plek van Hoop,* and especially in the interviews with ex-gangsters. This sense of family, looking after the ones in your inner circle and protecting their honour, is emphasised by Janga, an ex-gangster:

> Ek het my familie geverdedig. En steeds nou. Al is ek nie meer 'n gangster nie, ek meen, ek verdedig hulle nog altyd. Because, ek gaan nie nou sê ek is 'n groot man of wat, maar ek meen, daar wat ek loop, my naam het nog baie weight.[27] Janga (Personal Interview, WECODEC, 2003).

The interviewees in this film do not dwell on the violence, but do not mask the intention to protect the honour of the gang, or extract vengeance. Bra Keith describes a typical gang fight:

> They were not afraid. If I want to face you we faced. It was not like now: because you stand there, you shoot me. No, if I want to face you, I took out my knife, you took out your knife, and we face each other. There wasn't a thing such as: I'll call somebody to help me. No, I fight you! If somebody dies, it is hard luck!
>
> Bra Keith (Personal Interview, WECODEC, 2003:39)

In *Waiting for Valdez,* the retelling by Sharkey's friends, Feya and Tox, of the exploits of Valdez has strong resonances with Vigil's description of how gangs listen to the war stories of *veteranos (*Vigil, 1993: 108). The setting is evocative, with the boys throwing huge shadows on the wall behind them, the firelight flickering across their faces as they listen with rapt attention. As Feya, the

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[27] Translation: I protected my family. I still protect them, even if I am no longer a gangster. Because, I won't say I am a great man or something like that, but there where I go, my name still carries weight.

charismatic storyteller reaches the climax of his story of how Valdez shot an innocent man, his narrative is interrupted by a slice of real life – a gang of four are beating up a man. In silence, the boys watch this incident, and then Tox decides to call it a night – maybe fearing that further violence would interrupt the proceedings, and that there could be danger.

In their strong identification with the almost-mythical figure of Valdez, the boys find the prospect of being able to face the difficulties of their daily lives under apartheid. While they are engaged in telling the story, the past, represented by Sharkey's grandmother, passes on. The film ends with a lyrical sequence of Sharkey and his grandmother dancing together on the 'stoep' in front of the house – an elegy for times gone by, for values that are no longer of use in the disjointed world of the present, and a homage to a role model who cannot help him face an uncertain future. The characteristics of the gangster or cowboy Valdez, a thirst for vengeance and restored honour, are the qualities that will be more useful to him in the challenges he will face later.

The film offers a vision of strong family and community ties, people living in difficult circumstances but supported and sustained by those around them. Sharkey in *Waiting for Valdez* could have also spoken these words of Joseph Cotty from a personal interview given for *Westbury, Plek van Hoop*:

> My ouma het my iets belangrik geleer: dat dit is nié die situasie wat jy in is wat jou toekoms moet determine (nie). Sy het my altyd geleer dat eendag gaan dinge regkom, en sy het my altyd in baie nice

> woorde gesê dat dinge gaan regkom[28]. Joseph Cotty (Personal Interview, WECODEC, 2003)

In the interviews with community members in *Westbury, Plek van Hoop,* there is a sense of optimism that reflects this sense of moving forward on the basis of past experience. Winnie Africa, when interviewed for the documentary, confirms this spirit of hope and for the future:

> Wil ek meer hê? 'Yes I want more.' Ek wil nie meer hê vir my nie! Ek wil meer hê vir my gemeenskap! Ek wil baie dinge verander sien. Ek het 'n droom. Ek droom ek sien palm trees in Westbury. Ek sien roosbome wat groei. Al hierdie dinge. Ek sien baie goeie dinge vir Westbury. Somtyds wil ek die change te vinnig sien. I can't wait for the real change to come really. Dit is hoe ek dit sien. Dit is lekker om te lewe nou[29]. Winnie Africa (Personal Interview, WECODEC 2003)

In *Westbury, Plek van Hoop,* the community of Westbury has constructed a film that reflects the potential of the community more than the actual current reality. The film is a strong call for community solidarity, compassion and mutual support. The past was terrible and some of the actions of community members

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[28] Translation: My granny taught me an important thing : that it isn't the situation that determines your future. She always taught me that one day things will improve, and she always told me this in a nice way.

[29] Translation: Do I want more? Yes I want more. I don't want more for me! I want more for my community. I want to see many things change. I have a dream. I dream I see palm trees in Westbury. I see rose bushes growing. All these things. I see many good things for Westbury. Sometimes I want to see the change too quickly. I can't wait for the real change to come really. That's the way I see it. It's good to live now.

should be condemned, but the only way to move forward is with hope and a positive spirit. Although the interviewees seem to show that they have internalised the suffering and exclusion of apartheid society and are avoiding a full re-entry into the mainstream of cultural life in the new South Africa, this should not necessarily be seen as completely negative. If there is some apprehension about (re) joining the broader South African collective, they are demonstrating that by calling upon the interpersonal ties that have sprung from a common conception of their ethnic, if not racial, identity, they can create a sense of community: if not in everyday reality, at least a community of the imagination.

In this chapter, I have considered how two distinctly different films represent the community of Westbury. *Westbury, Plek van Hoop* is about the memory of the construction of Westbury as a community, the dislocation of the community and the way in which their marginality has been constructed around this sense of dislocation. It also offers a vision of the future, possibilities of what the community can be like in post-apartheid South Africa. *Waiting for Valdez* is based on the memory of a child, and represents memories of living in a marginal society through the eyes of the protagonist. In both films, certain subject positions emerge which offer and offer a view of the problem of community identity amongst Coloured people in South Africa after 1994. *Waiting for Valdez* does this by giving us an evocative representation of the circumstances in Westbury from which Coloured identity, however marginal, emerged, whereas *Westbury, Plek van Hoop* presents us with a factual account of how Westbury

has emerged from the past and is facing the future. When communities thus remember their past, the dissonances in their present situations as compared to the past can lead to the adoption of a rhetorical position that is not necessarily related to reality.

People relate to the past and present through the use of narrative. According to Connerton (1998:26), to remember is to make sense of isolated events, to place them in a pattern. Remembered history is presented to us in a specific form, which makes it meaningful to the viewer. Narrative, according to Roland Barthes (1988: 89), gains meaning by structure, and is a means of making sense of the world around us. This creation of meaning about an uncertain past and present is the core of the two films that are examined here. The documentary specifically attempts to claim a space for Westbury in a world that is transforming, no matter how tenuous that space may be. However, when the filmmakers themselves are unsure of the reality within which they are operating, and when their subject position in relation to the world is ambiguous, this negotiation sometimes becomes a performance. The performative element in the documentary under discussion lies in what Bruzzi describes as

> … the idea of disavowal, that simultaneously signals a desire to make a conventional documentary (that is, to give an accurate account of a series of factual events) while also indicating, through the mechanisms of performance… the impossibility of the documentary's cognitive function (Bruzzi, 2000:155).

Performance seems almost inevitable when recounting traumatic events from the past, as is the case in the two films. When representing the memory of shared

oppression and dislocation, a true representation is virtually unattainable. It seems impossible that the actual impact of events on the human psyche could be shown. Bill Nichols (1991:230) wonders how representation can ever be "of an order of magnitude commensurate with the magnitude of what it describes?" Slavoz Žižek discusses how a traumatic event is therefore only able to be grasped retrospectively, and cannot be represented adequately: "...the traumatic event is ultimately just a fantasy-construct filling out a certain void in a symbolic structure and, as such the retroactive effect of this structure" (Slavoz Žižek, 1989:169).

When the community of Westbury call upon memories of their traumatic past to reconstruct a narrative of their community, they are engaged in building this "fantasy-construct" which, according to Žižek (ibid.), will always be inadequate, with a sense of 'reality' ever-escaping the grasp of both filmmakers and viewers. However, from the close reading of *Westbury, Plek van Hoop* and *Waiting for Valdez,* it would seem that there is an avenue through which an approximation of lived experience can be represented – and that avenue is through identification with the feelings and emotions of the participants and characters in the films. Whether it is fiction or documentary, viewers relate to the meaning of a film through a subjective identification with characters – through *feeling.* The viewer connects with the depicted events and characters through mutual identification, by building a relationship with the characters, communities or places depicted in the film. In my view, feelings are made meaningful through

narrative and it is possible for a representation to approach a sense of the real when this emotional connection can be made.

In the genres of fiction and documentary filmmaking, the creation of meaning through narrative functions differently. By utilising a narrative structure, through testimonials voiced by the participants, the documentary can elicit an authentic feeling of lived experience, an emotive reconstruction of past events. This hinges on the degree to which the viewer is allowed to enter into the world of the participants through sharing their feelings. In the case of past trauma, as witnessed in the people of Westbury, these feelings could offer a window into the lived experience of the narrators.

The expository style and conventional structure in *Westbury, Plek van Hoop* are problematic because the documentary does not evidence a move away from the discourse of apartheid documentaries: rather, the style is being appropriated and reconstituted. In attempting to perform a claim of truth through this documentary, there is a specific agenda at work – icons of the community are held up for inspection and approval, and these icons become the competing voice in a film already redolent with 'rainbow nation' rhetoric due to the florid voice over. The closing statement of the film, for instance, indicates that "...die gemeenskap het beheer geneem oor hul eie noodlot en deur die helingsproses en ontwikkeling herstel die gemeenskapsgees en trots. (...the community has taken control of their own destiny and through the healing process and development, community spirit and pride are being restored)."

The narration holds up a vision of a community that is scarred but is healing, developing and looking towards a brighter future. There is an interesting inversion at play here: in trying to tell the truth about their community, the filmmakers succeed in highlighting some of the dissonances in their vision of themselves and their communal identity. In attempting to situate their imagining of the community as part of the broader vision of a new South African society, the filmmakers have offered an image of Westbury cleansed of drugs, violence and social ills, neglecting to include information about the very real problems that the community is facing in all areas: social, economic and political.

In the process of reconstructing their own past, the community demonstrates a clear desire to be part of the mainstream of post-apartheid South African society, where the emphasis is on reconciliation and on the ideology of repentance and forgiveness – a "post- truth and reconciliation society" where past transgressions need to be taken out, looked at and confronted, and not swept under the carpet. Instead of subverting the stereotypes of the community as violent and unstable, filled with dangerous people, the interviewees hold up an image of a community trying to atone for their sins. This cleansing ritual reminds us of Ebrahim Rasool's statement cited earlier on the fearful construction of Coloured consciousness, through a negative relation to the other (Rasool, 1996:56). This sense of internalised guilt, of trying not to look too hard at the injustices of the past, is part of a broader discourse in South Africa today. In the spirit of reconciliation, raking up past hurts and healing trauma through memory is an act that is somehow regarded as distasteful and tense with political implications.

If the remembrance of the past is accomplished somewhat inadequately in *Westbury, Plek van Hoop,* it seems to be more comfortably accomplished in *Waiting for Valdez.* In fiction, remembrance of the past can be reinterpreted and re-enacted without the danger of moving too close to uncomfortable present realities. Fiction masks its relation to fact by calling upon emotion and feeling in a more direct fashion and it becomes possible to represent what mere factual documentation cannot. Moreover, it becomes possible for the viewer to have a very real sense of identification with the feelings of the characters, and through these feelings to relate to the narrative in a direct way.

Waiting for Valdez elicits a deeper understanding of reality because fiction has the power to capture the *texture of the memory* of reality. While one needs to believe that documentary is aimed at giving us a closer performance of truth, in principle, it is fiction that better presents this possibility by reconstructing memories through textures of feelings to which we can relate. *Waiting for Valdez* is a film about memory, about looking back, with no political or factual agenda, and as such it offers the viewer a greater feeling of authenticity than *Westbury, Plek van Hoop.* Whereas in the documentary, there is a blurring of the boundaries between fact and fiction – this porousness aims to capture a sense of reality, a performance of a desired reality – in *Waiting for Valdez* the representation of the moment seems much closer because it has no claim to objectivity and can thus indulge in a more nuanced portrayal of memory which touches our emotions. In the subjectivity of memory, some kernel of truth can be found. Within the narrative structure of the film, the viewers are allowed to

tap into an authentic feeling of lived experience, as if they themselves were remembering the past.

Although both films try to represent history and communal memory and the past trauma of the community under apartheid, *Waiting for Valdez* succeeds to a greater extent in this intent because it relies on the representation of certain memories and feelings, memories that could be disavowed as factual representation if these were to become uncomfortable. While *Waiting for Valdez* is about remembering a state of living the marginality caused by dislocation and racial classification, *Westbury, Plek van Hoop* offers a performance of a different kind of marginality. The icons of the community who are held up as examples construct a new binary for the audience's perusal – instead of past stereotype of drug addicts, gangsters and prostitutes (as opposed to the rest of 'normal' society), we now see reformed gangsters, upwardly mobile youth and tireless religious and social workers wiping the slate clean (as opposed to the silenced voices of the current residents who may still take drugs, do crime and be unemployed). Thus within the film certain voices are silenced, marginal groups are disavowed, and a new stereotype emerges which is ideologically appropriate for the new South Africa.

Abebe Zegeye (2001:188) evokes the relationship between the possibilities inherent in Coloured culture and the broader South African society when he states: "The Coloured people of South Africa are sometimes rightly described as its 'living conscience'. They are an ongoing example, warts and all, of what South Africa could have been without Apartheid." Richard van der Ross (1979)

also echoes this view when he disavows the concept of Coloured identity or a distinct Coloured culture. Without apartheid, he explains, the notion of a separate Coloured identity would not have existed, and all South Africans would have been hybrids celebrating a communal cultural heritage. Homi Bhabha comes close to describing the process at work when previously disregarded cultural groups strive to represent marginal identities when he states that

> Hybrid agencies find their voice in a dialectic that does not seek cultural supremacy or sovereignty. They deploy the partial culture from which they emerge to construct visions of community, and versions of historic memory, that give narrative form to the minority positions they occupy; the outside of the inside: the part in the whole. (1996:59).

In the case of Westbury, the rediscovery of a communal identity or the construction of a new conceptual map takes place through reference to what the community shares or imagines it shares within the shifting social context of post-apartheid South Africa. Frantz Fanon describes this rediscovery of cultural identity as a

> …passionate research … directed by the secret hope of discovering beyond the misery of today, beyond self-contempt, resignation and abjuration, some very beautiful and splendid era whose existence rehabilitates us both in regard to ourselves and in regard to others (1976:170).

This "passionate research" is the quest for meaning in the confusing landscape of the modern world, and the connections constructed through ethnicity can provide an avenue for a stronger sense of community in future. This vision of a

common future and some form of historical continuity is an imagination of how the future could be, and as Cornell & Hartmann assert (1998:99) "…this act of the imagination is a classically ethnic act." Ironically, the fragmented racial identity and marginalisation that characterised the community of Westbury under apartheid may be the instrument by which a communal future can be created, when the power to determine that future is in the own hands of each individual.

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